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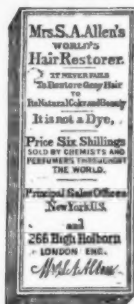
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## THE YELLOW FLAG.

By EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER IX. THE SMALL HOURS IN LONDON.

MARTIN GURWOOD and Humphrey Statham dined together that day at a club, of which the latter was a member, and sat together until late in the night, discussing memories of old times and the strange occurrences of recent days. When Martin returned to Great Walpole-street he was surprised to learn from the servant who let him in that Mrs. Calverley had not retired to rest, and that she desired to speak with him when he came in. A guilty pang shot through Martin's breast as he listened. What could be the meaning of this? Could his mother have discovered the secret of the Hendon mystery, and was she waiting to oburgate him for the part which he had taken in concealing it from her? Martin knew that, some day or other, such a contingency would arise, but he hoped that when it did he would have Statham by his side. He looked to Statham now for advice and assistance in every phase which the matter could assume, and dreaded being left to his own resources.

He found his mother in her bedroom, attired in a skimpy flannel dressing-gown, and sitting before the fire with her slippers upon the fender. She looked round on his opening the door, and uttered a sound which was partly a snort of defiance, and partly a groan of resignation.

"You wish to see me, mother, James tells me," said Martin. "I had no idea you would have been up, or I would have returned home sooner."

"I wish to see somebody, Martin," re-

turned Mrs. Calverley, querulously. "I thought that my life could not have been more wretched and solitary than it was in Mr. Calverley's time, but even he used to come home occasionally, while now I sit by myself from morning till night. Persons who are engaged and paid to be my companions go away, and even my own son gives himself up to his own devices, and does not come home until close upon midnight."

"My dear mother," said Martin, "as I said before, if I had had any idea that you were sitting up, I would have returned sooner. Tell me now," he said, pulling his chair close to hers, "what do you want me to do?"

"Nothing," replied Mrs. Calverley; "I never want any one to do anything for me. But I wanted to talk to you, if you can spare a few minutes to such an unimportant person as myself, about the future."

"She knows nothing about Hendon," thought Martin to himself, "or she would not have been able to have kept off from the subject for a minute." And greatly relieved at this idea, he said, pleasantly, "You know, mother, that I should be only too glad to carry out any of your wishes."

"And you will have an opportunity of proving what you say, Martin. You know that by Mr. Calverley's will I am now absolute mistress of the business in Mincing-lane. On our marriage, Mr. Calverley, in what I considered then the most ungenerous manner, reserved to himself the power of disposing of that business as he thought best; but I suppose he afterwards came into a better frame of mind, for he has left it entirely to me. The business as it stands at present will, I learn from Mr. Jeffreys, bring me in a very large income. Now I am the last woman in the world to set an

undue value upon riches, and my only care for them is that they may enable me to do more good to my fellow-creatures. Are you attending to me, Martin?" she said to her son, who was looking vacantly into the fire.

"Certainly, mother," said Martin, starting.

"Perhaps you will favour me with your particular attention just now," said Mrs. Calverley, with some asperity, "when I tell you that what I have got to say concerns yourself. If your character were different, you might think to yourself that, rich as I shall be, I might take the opportunity of making you independent, but such I know would not be your wish. You are one of those who rightly think that it is your mission to discharge your duty in the state of life to which you have been called, and I agree with you. There is to me no more beautiful sight than that of a minister engaged in the exercise of his vocation; the only change I would propose to you would be one in the scene of your labours.

"A change in the scene?" cried Martin.

"Exactly," answered Mrs. Calverley. "I should wish you to relinquish the vicarage of Lullington, and to establish yourself in London."

"In London?" cried Martin.

"Certainly," said his mother; "where there is money there is influence, and there would not, I imagine, be any difficulty in obtaining for you an incumbency in London, or if it came to that, there are always proprietary chapels to be purchased, and in them perhaps you would be more unfettered, and more able to conduct the services according to your own views."

"But, my dear mother," said Martin, "I am by no means sure——"

"That you would be popular," interrupted Mrs. Calverley. "You need not fear about that. I fancy there are few better judges of preaching than myself, and I have always been satisfied with the sermons which I have heard you deliver. It would be a great pleasure to me to know that my son's merits were properly recognised. And I don't think," she added with a slight toss of her head, "that he would have any reason to be ashamed of his mother, or of the style in which she lived. We may not be aristocrats, and our lives may not be attended by the sloth, luxury, and pomp which surround that portion of the community; but for solid wealth and the comfort which it brings, the home which has been raised by British industry need be surpassed by none."

Mrs. Calverley paused; and Martin, for

want of something better to say, said, "Of course, mother, I quite agree with you."

"My notion," pursued his mother, "is that you should live with me, and act as my right hand in all matters of business, and as a dispenser of my charity. My life has been one long martyrdom; it has pleased Heaven to afflict me with two unworthy husbands, men incapable of understanding those finer feelings which I possess, and which have been the sole means of lightening the burden laid upon me. I hope I may now be permitted in some degree to recompense myself for the solitude and submission in which I have lived, and to have a little sunshine at the close of a life which has been one long sacrifice for others. I hope that—Martin, Martin, what are you thinking of?"

What was he thinking of, as he sat there with his chin resting on his hands, and his eyes fixed intently on the fire? What were those words ringing in his ears—solitude, submission, sacrifice? Ah, how hollow and empty they sounded, these querulous complaints, this Pharisaical self-laudation, when he thought of the manner in which, under the influence of his wife's temper, John Calverley's life had been warped and twisted until his weak nature had been betrayed into the commission of a fearful crime, the result of which was yet impending over the head of that poor trusting girl. What was he thinking of? Of the little right he had in the thought even then floating through his mind, to condemn the dead man whose power of will had been so weak, whose temptation had been so strong! Who was he, to gauge and measure another man's sins, and to preach the doctrine of resistance, when—"What was he thinking of?" Mrs. Calverley's words repeated for the third time recalled him from his reverie.

"What was I thinking of? Why of course of the proposition you have just made to me, mother," he said aloud.

"It is one which scarcely seems to me to need much reflection," said Mrs. Calverley, coldly. "In making it I have, as usual, not considered myself, but left the advantages wholly to you."

"Of course, mother, I fully appreciate your kindness," said Martin; "and the mere fact of living with you, and being able to relieve the solitude under which you suffer, would, of course, have much weight with me. By the way, you were alluding just now to Madame Du Tertre's absence. I have never hitherto had an opportunity of asking you how she first became an inmate of this house."

"Not through any invitation of mine," said Mrs. Calverley, "though I am bound to say that as soon as she came here she saw the melancholy life I led, and endeavoured to alleviate it to the best of her power. One of the few things I have to thank Mr. Calverley for is his introduction of Madame Du Tertre."

"Oh," said Martin, looking very much astonished, "it was through Mr. Calverley that you made her acquaintance?"

"Certainly," said his mother. "I went down to Mincing-lane one day, and found Madame Du Tertre closeted with Mr. Calverley in his private room. I thought they would be confused at my entrance, but Mr. Calverley, quite at his ease, presented his companion to me as a French lady, a widow with a small fortune, which she had brought to him to invest. He stated, at the same time, that she was a stranger in London, and without friends, and suggested that, as he was compelled to be much away—compelled, indeed," repeated Mrs. Calverley, with a sniff of defiance, "it might break the solitude of my life if this French lady, a cheerful person, playing the piano, and that sort of thing, came to live with me as my companion."

"Oh, that was what Mr. Calverley proposed," said Martin, reflectively. "And you agreed to it?"

"I agreed to it as a temporary measure," said Mrs. Calverley, "but it seemed to work well, and has continued ever since."

"You had never seen Madame Du Tertre before? never heard Mr. Calverley mention her name?"

"Certainly not; neither the one nor the other. What on earth makes you ask these questions, Martin?"

But Martin had fallen back again into his chair. His eyes were once more riveted on the fire, and his ears were deaf to his mother's voice. What a curious woman his mother was! How weak, even in the grim obstinacy on which she prided herself; how liable to be deceived, in spite of all the suspicion which she exhibited! This Madame Du Tertre, then, had been introduced into the house by Mr. Calverley, and his mother had accepted her as her companion on the very slight evidence of the story which Mr. Calverley had told her, and which might have been concocted between him and the Frenchwoman a few minutes before her arrival.

What had Madame Du Tertre in view in seeking for an introduction into this house? What could be her motive for allying herself with such a woman as Mrs.

Calverley? Whatever motive it might have been, it must be still in existence, for had she not made it a condition of assisting him with Alice that he would not interfere with her plans as regarded his mother? What could those plans be? Madame Du Tertre was not a mere wretched creature sponging upon any one who would befriend her, and earning with fulsome adulation her nightly shelter and her daily bread. She had money of her own, as he understood; not much, indeed, but sufficient to provide her with the necessities of life, and she was the last woman in the world to give up her freedom, and to go in for mere vulgar mercenary scheming for a material home with such a person as Mrs. Calverley, to endure the position of companion in the grim house in Great Walpole-street. She must have something large at stake, must be actuated by some ulterior motive of vast importance. What can that motive be? Who is she? Where did she come from? When and how commenced her acquaintance with Mr. Calverley?

"What on earth makes you ask these questions, Martin?"

The harsh grating voice recalled him to himself, but even then he was at first a little dazed.

"These questions? What questions? Oh, I recollect; about Madame Du Tertre. Merely curiosity, mother; I could not possibly have any other motive."

"Well, now that I have satisfied your curiosity, and told you all I know—which was little enough, for Mr. Calverley was reticent towards me in that as in all other matters of his life—now that I have done my best to give you this information, perhaps you will be good enough to return to the subject which I started, and tell me what you think about my proposition."

"You won't expect me to give you a definite answer at once, mother? Such a step as leaving one's parish, with all its old friends and associations, and wholly changing the sphere of one's duties, requires much consideration."

"I should think when the advantages which are offered to you are properly weighed, you would not be very long in making up your mind. There are few young men circumstanced as you are—and you must be good enough to remember that you have nothing but your living to depend upon—who have such a chance offered to them. I have often noticed with great pain that you are devoid of any ambition in your profession, and are quite content to live among farmers and people

of that kind. But that is not the sort of life I choose for my son. It is my wish that you should come up to town, as I have said before; that you should live here, and take up a proper position in society; that you should marry, and——"

"Yes, mother," said Martin, with a faint smile, putting up his hand in protest, "but surely, as I said before, these are matters which require a little consideration. By the way, supposing this plan of yours were carried out, what do you propose to do with Madame Du Tertre?"

"Madame Du Tertre again," cried Mrs. Calverley. "Bless my soul, Martin, how you do harp upon that woman; one would really think that you had fallen in love with her yourself. A nice daughter-in-law she'd make; only if you're going to marry her I would rather you would keep in the country, if you please. She would quite shine at Lullington."

Mrs. Calverley gave vent to a low sardonic chuckle, the nearest approach she ever made to a laugh; but Martin Gurwood looked very grave.

"I do not understand the point of the joke," he said: "it is, perhaps, because I have been for some years accustomed only to the society of Lullington; but I confess I do not see anything particularly odd in my inquiring what was to become of one who is now a prominent member in your household, after you had carried out the change which you propose to make in it."

Mrs. Calverley was always a little afraid of her son, and there was something in the tone of his voice as he made this remark which constrained her to be civil.

"I did not mean anything unpleasant," she said, with less than her usual rigidity of manner; "I only thought it odd that you could be in any doubt about the matter. Madame Du Tertre is here as my hired companion—when I say is here, I should say ought to be, for I hold her absence just now to be quite unjustifiable, and when it suits my convenience, and I have quite done with her, I shall pay and dismiss her, as such persons are usually paid and dismissed."

"You will?"

"Most certainly! You cannot imagine for an instant that I had any idea of attaching Madame Du Tertre to the new manner of life which I propose for myself and for you?"

Martin's thoughts were beginning to wander again. "No, no, of course not," he said, half vacantly.

"Of course not," repeated Mrs. Cal-

verley. "I consented to receive Madame Du Tertre as my companion, because I was shamefully deserted by Mr. Calverley, and left to pass all my time in moping solitude. I made a home and a comfortable home for him, and though, as I have said before, he could not appreciate the finer feelings of my nature, I would have been content to put them on one side. Now, I look forward to a very different state of things. You will be my companion, I shall have you instead of Mr. Calverley to deal with, and you will be able to understand my ways of life, and I shall be able to help you in your career. Under these circumstances Madame Du Tertre would merely be a clog upon both of us. I am by no means sure, Martin," said Mrs. Calverley, growing very stiff and speaking with great fervour, "I am by no means sure that it is a right thing to have a Frenchwoman in the house, even though she is a Huguenot; I have experienced it already on several occasions, when I have found the greatest difficulty in convincing the neighbours that she belonged to the Reformed Church. And with you as a clergyman permanently resident in the house, a suspicion of that kind would be extremely unpleasant. Moreover, there are many other reasons which I think would render Madame Du Tertre's further sojourn here particularly undesirable, and as she is merely one of the household, it will be of course easy enough for me to rid myself of her when I wish. You seem very sleepy, Martin," said his mother, perceiving that he had relapsed into his former absent condition, "and I think you had better go to bed now that I have given you an outline of my plan, and it is for you to think it over, and see how it will suit you. If you agree to it, as I have no reason to doubt you will, I shall give Madame Du Tertre notice to leave directly after her return."

Then Martin rose from his seat, touched with his lips his mother's ear, which she turned round to him for the purpose, and retired to his own room.

Once there he put on his dressing-gown and slippers, flung himself into an arm-chair, and resumed at his ease the chain of thought which had been so frequently interrupted. But now it contained a new element, which had been imported into it by his mother's last words. Immediately Madame Du Tertre returned to the house she would receive notice that her services would be speedily dispensed with. What would be the Frenchwoman's feelings at such an intimation? She had given no

sign of any intention to leave her present quarters in Great Walpole-street; but, on the contrary, seemed to consider herself completely settled there for some time to come, and was unquestionably desirous of retaining her power over Mrs. Calverley. That, Martin recollected, she had not scrupled to acknowledge to him. On the other hand, inexperienced as Martin was in matters of the world, he had sufficient tact to perceive that his mother, for her own purposes, had always been particularly civil to Madame Du Tertre, and both by her speeches and her actions had led the Frenchwoman to believe that her presence in Great Walpole-street was indispensable to the well-being of the household. When, then, Madame Du Tertre on her return from Hendon is informed by Mrs. Calverley that different arrangements are about to be made under which her companionship will be no longer required, when she receives that, which, no matter how much politeness is imported into the manner of giving it, is in fact her dismissal, will she not with that shrewdness and suspicion which are so eminently characteristic of her, at once define that this is not the act of Mrs. Calverley, who has always hitherto been so partial to her, but that this conduct on his mother's part is due to his influence? And provided that she attaches importance to the retention of her position in the Great Walpole-street household, as Martin undoubtedly believes she does, will she not instantly seek to revenge herself for what she imagines to be his interference, and has she not a subject for her vengeance immediately to her hand in poor helpless Alice?

Who was this woman? What were the motives prompting her to the game she was playing? And what would be its result?

The future seemed all dark and vague. The mist hung over it as it did over the sleeping city, a shivering glance at which Martin took from his bedroom window, and saw the first streaks of the wintry dawn struggling fitfully through the black clouds ere he retired to rest.

#### WAGERS.

WHOEVER called wagers fools' arguments was not over complimentary to his countrymen, since Englishmen have always been given to show confidence in their judgment by backing their opinion with a bet. At the beginning of the last century, the Spectator complained that rich fledglings of the Bar

took advantage of poorer frequenters of the coffee-houses, and wagered themselves into repute as historians, geographers, statesmen, and mathematicians, by capping their assertions with the offer of a bet, which their more learned opponents were compelled to decline from lack of means, and so the long purses came off victorious. A little later on, men of quality were accused of making such a business of betting, that the only genteel way of expressing dissent was to risk a thousand pounds, or take the chance of being run through the body. Heavy sums depended upon the most trivial questions, and anything at all dubious was made the subject of a wager. It was held the correct thing to speculate upon the likelihood of one bride attaining the dignity of motherhood before another, or to lay for or against any rumoured match coming off. Thus the birth of a child brought pleasure and profit to folks not in any way connected with the family to which the little new-comer belonged; and the breaking off of a match affected the fortunes of many besides the parties immediately concerned in the matter. Writing to inform a friend of the marriage of Lord Digby and Miss Fielding, Gilly Williams says thousands might have been won at White's upon his lordship not knowing such a woman existed.

So common was it to crown a dispute with a bet, that when, in the course of a debate, Mr. Pulteney charged Sir Robert Walpole with misquoting Horace, the prime minister replied by offering to bet a guinea that he had not done so, and the wager was accepted. The clerk of the House was called upon to decide the question, and declared Pulteney right, upon which Sir Robert threw the guinea across the House, to be picked up by his opponent, with the remark that it was the first public money he had touched for a long time. The name of the great Whig leader, Charles James Fox, figured pretty often in the wager-book at Brooks's. In 1744, we find him wagering with Lord Northampton that he will be called to the Bar within four years' time. In 1755, he received one guinea from Lord Bolingbroke, upon condition of paying him a thousand pounds when the debts of the country amounted to a hundred and seventy-one millions; an event Fox lived to see come to pass. In 1774, Lord Clermont staked ten guineas with Mr. Crawford, in hopes of Fox one day being worth a hundred thousand pounds, clear of all debts; upon that far-off contingency happening, five hundred pounds

were to be paid in return for the ten guineas. In 1792, Sheridan registered a couple of bets of twenty guineas a side, whereby he asserted his conviction that Parliament would not permit another state lottery after that to be drawn in February, 1793. He made a mistake, and lost his money.

White's was, however, the great temple of wagering, and some of the wagers laid at White's were certainly scandalous. Walpole writes, "One of the youths at White's has committed a murder, and intends to repeat it. He betted fifteen hundred guineas that a man could live twelve hours under water; hired a desperate fellow, sunk him in a ship by way of experiment, and both ship and man have not appeared since. Another man and ship are to be tried for their lives, instead of Mr. Blake, the assassin." Lord Stair caused some talk in Paris, when Louis the Fourteenth was taken ill, by betting that his majesty would not live beyond a certain date. Voltaire said the ambassador only followed a custom of his countrymen, an assertion that might have been vindicated by a reference to the wager-book at White's; for there it was usual to pit one man against another, or in other words, back one man to live longer than another, so that there was scarcely any well-known individual upon whose life thousands of pounds did not depend. Says a denouncer of this fashionable vice of the period: "The various changes in the health of one who is the subject of many bets, occasion many serious reflections to those who have ventured large sums on his life and death. Those who would be gainers by his decease, upon every slight indisposition, watch all the stages of his illness, and are as impatient for his death as the undertaker who expects to have the care of his funeral; while the other side are very solicitous about his recovery, send every hour to know how he does, and take as much care of him as a clergyman's wife does of her husband, who has no other fortune than his living. I remember a man with the constitution of a porter, upon whose life very great odds were laid; but when the person he was pitted against was expected to die every week, this man shot himself through the head, and the knowing ones were taken in." The same writer says the practice of pitting was invented by a nobleman, who was also the first to reduce betting to an art, and teach the world how to hedge a bet. So clever was he in this way that he

so contrived to bet upon his own life that live or die the odds were in his favour.

Lord Mountford and Sir John Bland staked twenty guineas a side upon the lives of two noted men, the former backing Beau Nash to outlive Colley Cibber. The comedian died in 1757, at the age of eighty-six, the beau in 1761, at the age of eighty-seven, but before the first event came about both the wagers had committed suicide. Lord March betted Mr. Pigot five hundred pounds that Sir William Codrington would survive his (Mr. Pigot's) father. Old Mr. Pigot died suddenly the morning before the laying of the wager. Lord March nevertheless claimed the money. His opponent refused to pay, holding that the bet was void. The parties joined issue in the Court of King's Bench, the case being tried before Lord Mansfield, who ruled in the plaintiff's favour, and Mr. Pigot had to pay the full amount claimed, and costs besides. Another curious wager, hanging upon the duration of a man's life, found a settlement in a court of law. At a dinner-party at the house of Sir Mark Sykes, the conversation turned upon the dangers to which Bonaparte was exposed, and the host, in a foolish moment, offered to take a hundred guineas from any one of the company, and pay back a guinea a day as long as Bonaparte lived. The Reverend B. Gilbert accepted the offer, and paid down his hundred guineas. For three years he received his guinea a day regularly enough, then the baronet grew tired of his bad bargain, and refused to continue his payments. The clergyman brought an action to compel Sir Mark to fulfil the agreement, which came on at the York assizes in 1812. The counsel for the defence contended that the transaction was illegal, since it gave the plaintiff a beneficial interest in Bonaparte's life, which might induce him, in case of an invasion, to do his utmost to preserve the life of an enemy of his country, and obtained a verdict in favour of Sir Mark Sykes. Nothing daunted, Mr. Gilbert appealed to the Court of King's Bench for a new trial. Lord Ellenborough, seeing nothing immoral or impolitic in the agreement, granted a rule to show cause, but after hearing the arguments on either side, the judges decided against re-opening the case, on the ground that as the wager created an undue interest in the preservation of the life of a public enemy, and on the other hand held out an inducement to plot his assassination, it tended to produce public mischief, and was

therefore illegal. A more notable wager case still was that fought out in the same court, before Lord Mansfield, in 1777. The plaintiff, Mr. Hayes, had given the defendant, a broker, one hundred guineas for a policy, insuring the payment of seven times the amount whenever he could prove that the mysterious Chevalier d'Eon was a woman. The evidence regarding the chevalier's sex was not disputed, the defendant relying upon two pleas, that the insurance was a gambling, indecent, unnecessary proceeding, and that the plaintiff had advantage over him. In dismissing the latter plea from consideration, Lord Mansfield said he remembered two gentlemen disputing as to the size of the Venus de' Medici until they came to bet upon it, and one said, "I will not deceive you. I tell you fairly, I have measured the statue myself;" to which the other returned, "Well, and did you think I would be such a fool as to lay if I had not measured it? I will lay you for all that." While expressing his regret at not being able to make both parties to such a wager suffer loss, the Lord Chief Justice ruled that the agreement was not an illegal one, and was to be carried out, and the jury found accordingly. No less than seventy-five thousand pounds is said to have depended upon the result, many policies of the same nature having been issued on the Stock Exchange. The brokers eventually got the best of it on appeal, by pleading that no insurance was valid when the person insuring could not prove an antecedent interest in the person or thing insured—so that they had been playing the game vulgarly known as "heads I win, tails you lose." After all, however, there was not much wrong done, for when the chevalier died it was proved beyond all dispute that the witnesses in the cause had perjured themselves.

Wagers like the above, depending upon circumstances utterly beyond the control of the wagers, are pure and simple gambling matters. Wagers depending upon the ingenuity, skill, or endurance of one of the bettors come in a different category, and there is some merit in winning them. When the Earl of March undertook for a wager of a thousand guineas to provide a four-wheeled carriage, drawn by four horses, and driven by a man, to travel nineteen miles within an hour, he did not hesitate at spending seven hundred pounds in the preliminary experiments, and was rewarded for his perseverance by an easy

triumph. The earl's carriage was a sort of skeleton one, resembling in appearance a gun-carriage, but constructed in the lightest possible manner. The slender pole was lapped with fine wire; the driver's seat was of leather straps covered with velvet; the breechings were of whalebone, the bars of thin wood strengthened with steel springs; the harness was of thin leather covered with silk, and the brass boxes of the wheels had oil-tins attached to them to drop oil slowly for one hour exactly. The whole affair could be easily carried by a man. The driver was only a driver in name, for each horse carried a jockey, and between them they managed to do the nineteen miles in fifty-three minutes and twenty-seven seconds. Cowper Thornhill well earned his five hundred guineas, when, on the 29th of April, 1745, he rode between Stilton and Shoreditch Church thrice, covering thereby two hundred and thirteen miles in twelve hours and seventeen minutes. In 1791, a Mr. Wilde rode a hundred and twenty-seven miles in nine hours and twenty-one minutes, with the aid of ten horses. Neither of these feats of horsemanship, however, surpassed Barnard Calvert's achievement in 1619, when, setting out from St. George's Church, Southwark, at three in the morning, he rode to Dover, left his horse there, and crossed over to Calais in a small vessel; then returning the same way, he took horse again at Dover, and reached St. George's before eight in the evening, the entire journey being accomplished in seventeen hours and ten minutes. Wagers relying upon their own legs have done things equally remarkable. In 1773, a lawyer's clerk, named Powell, walked from London to York, rested one night there, and walked back again all in the space of six days. In 1750, a man over forty years old ran from Shoreditch to the eight-mile stone beyond Edmonton in fifty minutes. In 1763, a shepherd ran fifteen miles on Moulsey Hurst in one hour and twenty-eight minutes, and a militia-man walked from London to Bristol in nineteen hours and thirty-four minutes. In 1809 the bells of Newmarket rang in celebration of Captain Barclay completing his task of walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours. At the beginning of the present century, men like Squire Osbaldeston and Captain Ross were ready to go anywhere, and do anything at a moment's notice. Let the captain himself, still, as Wimbledon knows, to the fore, be called as a witness. "A large party were assembled at

Black Hall, in Kincardineshire, time, the end of July or beginning of August. We had all been shooting snipes and flapper-ducks in a large morass on the estate called Lumphannon. We had been wading amongst bulrushes up to our middles for seven or eight hours, and had had a capital dinner. After the ladies had gone to the drawing-room, I fell asleep; and about nine o'clock was awakened by the late Sir Andrew Keith Hay, who said: 'Ross, old fellow! I want you to jump up and go as my umpire with Lord Kennedy, to Inverness. I have made a bet of twenty-five hundred pounds a side that I get there on foot before him!' Nothing came amiss to the men of that day. My answer was, 'All right, I'm ready;' and off we started, there and then, in morning costume, with thin shoes and silk stockings on our feet. We went straight across the mountains, and it was a longish walk. I called to my servant to follow with my walking-shoes and worsted stockings, and Lord Kennedy did the same. They overtook us after we had gone seven or eight miles. Fancy my disgust! My idiot brought me, certainly, worsted stockings, but instead of shoes, a pair of tight Wellington boots! The sole of one boot vanished twenty-five miles from Inverness, and I had now to finish the walk barefooted. We walked all night, next day, and the next night—raining torrents all the way. We crossed the Grampians, making a perfectly straight line, and got to Inverness at one P.M. We never saw or heard of Sir A. L. Hay (he went by the coach-road, via Huntly and Elgin, thirty-six miles further than we, but a good road), who appeared at ten A.M., much cast down at finding he had been beaten." In this extraordinary walking-match, Lord Kennedy and Captain Ross walked between ninety and ninety-eight miles, and Sir Andrew between a hundred and twenty-six and a hundred and thirty-two, not bad work in bad weather, after a tiring day's shooting, and a hearty dinner!

Sportsmen of the last generation cared little for consequences so long as they won their wagers. Lord Kennedy backed Captain Douglas to beat Captain Ross across four miles of country. The night before the race it was mutually agreed that crossing, jostling, or riding down were to be allowed. The first jump was a five-barred gate; when some forty yards from it, Ross saw his opponent's horse intended to refuse, and, holding his own well in hand, prepared to seize the opportunity. As

Radical turned, Ross struck the spurs into Clunker, sending Douglas's horse heels over head, and knocking Douglas himself over the gate. The latter soon recovered himself and remounted, but by that time Ross was so far ahead that the race was virtually over. "I suppose," says the victor, "in these shopkeeping days, killing a man in that way would be brought in wilful murder; not so in 1826; the verdict would have been justifiable homicide." Desperate as the act was, Captain Ross was only acting according to the conditions of the match; but no such plea could be raised on behalf of the perpetrators of murder at Chicago in 1866. Two horses named Butler and Corney were matched at trotting, the former being driven by one M'Keene. Darkness set in before the horses started for the decisive heat, which there was every probability of Butler winning. They had not gone far on their journey when a crash was heard, and Butler now rushed by the judge driverless; by-and-bye came Corney, whose jockey quietly observed as he pulled up at the winning post, "You'll find M'Keene on the track below." He was found there with his skull smashed in. A board had been wrenched from the track fence, and firmly planted near the course in such a way that as Butler came up at his best pace, his driver's head was dashed against the end of the plank, and the match won and a life lost. Wagers have sometimes proved fatal to the unconscious subjects of them. About sixty years ago a French nobleman wagered twenty thousand francs that he would ride a horse, so vicious, that for several months it had been fed by pushing its provender through a hole in an adjoining stall. The count's wife, hearing of her husband's mad bet, went one morning into the horse's stable, placed a pistol at its head, fired, and the animal fell dead at her feet, as she exclaimed, "Thank God, I have done my duty!" Sir Thomas Hoste, of Aston, was concerned in a more tragical affair. Riding home from the hunting-field with some friends, the baronet extolled his cook's punctuality in such extravagant fashion, that he was badgered into risking a considerable sum upon it. Unluckily, for the first time, the cook was behind time with the dinner. Enraged at the jeers of his visitors, the irate Sir Thomas made for the kitchen, took up a cleaver lying too readily, and with one blow killed his unhappy servant.

Few fortunes would be lost on the turf, if all racing-men were as cautious in speculating as the owner of the famous Beeswing, who was heard taking counsel with his jockey just before a race. "I've taken fifteen guineas to two about the mare, Robert; shall I hedge?" To which the more reckless Bob replied, "In course, nout o' the sort, stan' it out—be a man or a mouse." Had Mr. Ord been a jockey himself, he would never have had the courage to back himself to win Derby and Oaks, and get married in the same week, as Robinson did to his great profit. Let who will believe the proverb, second thoughts are not always best, though Forth the jockey-trainer found them so upon one occasion. Crockford had laid him long odds against his winning the Derby upon Exquisite. Soon after making the bet, the trainer took a strong fancy to another horse under his care, and asked Crockford if he had any objection to his substituting Frederick in place of his first-named champion. "None in the least," said the bookmaker. "You may ride both if you like, for neither has the ghost of a chance." Forth proved the better judge; he did win the Derby upon Frederick, and the rejected Exquisite obtained second honours. The brothers Dawson once had an odd bet about a race. In training Mentor, Mr. Thomas Dawson made himself very obnoxious to the horse, who rightly held the trainer responsible for the manner in which he was worked at exercise. It became necessary to give Mentor a rest, and to that end he was sent to Mr. Matthew Dawson's place, where he was allowed to take his ease, and became on the best of terms with his new acquaintance. The latter mentioning the fact to his brother, Mr. Thomas bet him a new hat that he would not dare to approach the horse if the animal heard his voice. A party was soon made up to visit Mentor and see the wager decided. Mentor received Matthew with his usual condescension; suddenly came a loud whisper from behind of "Poor old Mentor"—and in a couple of seconds there was not a biped in the stable. Another wager decided by a horse, was one springing out of a dispute between two hay-growers as to the quality of each other's hay. They could not agree in selecting a referee, until one suggested that each of them should lay a sample of his hay before a horse belonging to an officer of high rank; this was done, and after trying both, the animal showed a decided preference for the sample provided

by the man who suggested the sensible test.

In September, 1788, says the Annual Register, "A young Irish gentleman, for a very considerable wager, set out on Monday the 22nd instant, to walk to Constantinople and back again in one year;" and in June of the following year, Mr. Whalley arrived about this time in Dublin from his journey to the Holy Land, considerably within the limited time of twelve months. The wager laid on the performance of that expedition was twenty thousand pounds. Buck Whalley was a Dublin macaroni, whose appearance in a swallow-tailed blue coat, gay waistcoat, buckskin breeches, and top-boots, created no little astonishment at Jerusalem. He was taken for a madman; and thanks to that belief and a stout shilelagh, went on his way unmolested, and was enabled to return home to claim his winnings, and be henceforth dubbed Jerusalem Whalley. Men have done odd things enough for the sake of a few pounds. Pepys records that Lords Arran and Castlehaven ran down and killed a stout buck in St. James's Park. In 1766 a man crossed the Thames from Somerset-stairs in a butcher's tray. In 1826, Mr. Henry Hunt drove his father's blacking van, four-in-hand, over the frost-bound Serpentine. A merchant once paved a hundred square yards with common stones in less than nine hours. A Berkshire gentleman felled a hundred and seventy-one trees of one sort and another in six hours and twenty-five minutes. A naval officer rode a blind horse round Sheerness race-course without handling the reins, steering his steed safely by fastening the reins to his feet. Mr. Poole, of Hodshrove, rode an old mare down the steepest part of the Devil's Dyke, near Brighton, a descent of three hundred yards, almost sheer in some places, without deviating more than three yards to the right or left of his starting-point. General Charretie, after one perusal of the Morning Post, repeated the entire contents of the paper from the date to the publisher's name, without a single blunder or omission. One man ran a mile, walked a mile, wheeled a barrow a mile, trundled a hoop a mile, and hopped upon one leg for the same distance, in fifty-eight minutes. Another ran two coach-wheels together for a mile, ran a six-inch cart-wheel a mile, ran backwards half a mile, rode two miles, and jumped over twenty five-barred gates without touching, in thirty-six and a half minutes. A medical student ran four times round the railings of St. Clement's Danes

while the church clock struck twelve, and chimed the Lass o' Gowrie, the distance being altogether six hundred and eighty yards, and the striking and chiming occupying exactly three minutes, leaving the runner twenty seconds to the good. During the siege of the Crimean stronghold, three men of the Ninety-third regiment bet they would get a rose from Sebastopol, and won their wager, after a smart bout with a party of Russian sharp-shooters. Some years ago a London waterman wagered that he and his dog would jump from the centre arch of Westminster Bridge, and land at Lambeth together. He leaped from the bridge, and the dog followed suit, but taking it into his head that his master was in danger of drowning, the faithful fellow dragged him willy-nilly to shore, and by his well-intentioned blunder lost the waterman his wager. When the false news came to England that Sebastopol had fallen, three days after the battle of the Alma, a party of Sussex men drank to the health of the victors at a certain inn, but one incredulous man would not believe the glad tidings, and offered to give the landlord a sovereign upon condition of receiving a shilling a day as long as the Russians held their own. The offer was accepted, and for many a Saturday night did "the Russian" look for his seven shillings, the unlucky believer in the prowess of the allies eventually paying some eighteen pounds for his single sovereign. Another lost wager was that of the impudent rascal who had such faith in the good lasses of Worcester, that he bet he would kiss fifty girls in going down the High-street of the faithful city. Unfortunately for his speculation, he caught a Tartar the very first attempt, and got three weeks' hard labour for his pains.

An odd match came off at York in 1806, between Thomas Hodgson and Samuel Whitehead, the question being which of the two could assume the most original character. Whitehead got himself up half man and half woman, one side of him representing a fashionable lady, the other a negro, booted and spurred. Hodgson, who was adjudged the winner, appeared as a veritable man of money; his coat and his waistcoat were covered with bank-notes, his hat-band was of the same valuable material, while a paper affixed to his back told those whom it concerned that he was John Bull. Not reckoning a purse filled with gold worn on his hat, Hodgson's trimmings were worth three hundred and seventy-five guineas. "We are extremely

sorry," says the recorder of the contest, "that the whole of the money cannot be converted, as it certainly ought, to the use of his lawful creditors!" Brunel once got the best of Stephenson over a wager. They were travelling together in a railway carriage, Stephenson wrapped in a dark plaid, on the exact disposition of the folds of which he rather plumed himself. "You are looking at my plaid," said he to Brunel. "I'll bet you ten pounds you cannot put it on properly the first time." "I'll bet ten pounds against the plaid," said Brunel. "If I put it on right when we get out at the next station, the plaid is mine; if I miss, I pay you ten pounds." "Done," said Stephenson. Brunel sat silent until the train stopped, then stepping on the platform, he asked for the plaid, which was slowly unwound by its owner, and handed over; not to be handed back again, for Brunel wound it round his own shoulders as if he had always worn it. He had never tried it before, but when challenged, did not like to be beaten, and at once set to work to study the folds of the plaid. "I got the thing pretty clear in my head before we reached the station, and when I saw him get out of it, I knew I was right, so I put it on at once." Brougham contrived to make a holiday pay for itself by the exercise of a little shrewdness. It was in his college days, that, by way of seeing a little life, he went one autumn to Dumfries, in order to make one at the Caledonian Hunt meeting. According to the then custom, everybody dined at a table d'hôte, and after dinner betting set in. Brougham offered to bet the whole company that none of them would write down the manner in which he meant to go to the races next day. Those who accepted his challenge wrote down their conjectures, and Brougham wrote down his intention of travelling in a sedan-chair, a mode of conveyance no one had hit upon. To the races he went, an immense crowd seeing him safely chaired to the course. The bet was then renewed as to the manner of his return to Dumfries, the acceptors taxing their wits to imagine the most improbable methods of travelling. Brougham had calculated upon this, and won the double event by returning in a post-chaise and pair. Equally shrewd was the gentleman who, in backing a flock of geese to beat a drove of turkeys in a race on a turnpike-road, stipulated for choice of place and time. He fixed upon an hour before sundown. At the start, the turkeys went ahead as if they were going to win in a

walk, but as the sun set they broke from their ranks, rushed through the hedges in search of roosting-places, and spite of all their drover could do, roost they did; while the geese, travelling along sedately, reached the end of the course before their rivals had finished taking their nap. A good story is told of a couple of wagers in which Daniel Webster, Tazewell, and General Jackson's secretary for the navy were concerned, and of which the last named was the victim. The three were walking together on the north bank of the Potomac, and while Webster lingered a little in the rear, Tazewell offered to bet Branch a ten-dollar hat that he could prove him to be on the other side of the river. "Done," said Branch. "Well," said Tazewell, pointing to the opposite shore, "Isn't that one side of the river?" "Yes." "Well, isn't this the other side?" "Yes." "Then, as you are here, are you not on the other side?" "Why, I declare," said the victim, "so it is! but here comes Webster, I'll win back my bet from him." As Daniel came up, Branch saluted him with, "Webster, I'll bet you a ten-dollar hat that I can prove that you are on the other side of the river." "Done." "Well, isn't this one side?" "Yes." "Well, isn't that the other side?" "Yes, but I am not on that side." Branch had to pay for two hats, and learned it is possible to bet both ways and win upon neither. Losing a bet may be a very profitable transaction too. When a wall-chalker offered to chalk Warren's Blacking on every wall round London for fifty pounds, the blacking-maker exclaimed, "I'll bet you two hundred pounds to one that it cannot be done in a month." Warren lost the bet, but got the best and cheapest advertisement he ever had.

Our American cousins are by no means chary in the matter of betting. Let one instance suffice. Two painters at work on a lake steamer under repair appropriated some of the white lead provided for their use, by tying in their overalls at the ankles, and filling the space between trousers and overalls with white-lead. To reach the shore from the vessel they had to cross a plank. In doing this, one stumbled and fell into the lake, sinking like a mill-stone. His friend stood on shore bewailing his fate, and crying out, "Oh dear! oh dear! what will become of his poor wife and children?" "What are you blubbering about," said a bystander, "don't you see they are getting ready to haul him out? He's got to rise three times you know!"

"Got to rise three times!" exclaimed the painter, pulling out his purse, "I'll bet he don't come up once!"

#### LOOKING FORWARD.

WITH hopeful eyes turned future-wards we stand,  
Doing our work, not blessed, but content;  
And though but rarely loving, hand meets hand,  
From heart to heart love's messages are sent.  
Our present life is twilight, calm and still,

Wherein we watch and wait the morrow's light,  
And finish daytime tasks with right goodwill,  
For this shall make our harvest sunshine bright.  
Oh, blessed reaping-time of love long sown;  
Oh, golden harvest to be gathered in;  
Oh, happy day when love shall claim his own,  
Oh, perfect rest our fearless wills shall win.  
Oh, blessed future, dimly seen but dear,  
And blessed time that daily brings thee near.

We have no time for foolish sighs and tears!  
No room in all our lives for vain regret;  
No need to mourn the spring-time of our years,  
No past to haunt, no sorrow to forget.

For our great love has drawn a curtain dense

Across the years that seem so far away,

And all our past is hidden, we commence

A truer, better living from to-day.

Not yet the currents of our lives may meet,

And mingling, broaden to a stream of joy,

But peace is ours; and love serene and sweet,

Shall conquer care, and soothe the world's annoy.

So on this vantage-ground of patient love,

We take firm footing. What shall us remove?

#### A SURREY SELBORNE.

I AM a great-nephew, on my mother's side, of that well-known and delightful writer on natural history, the Reverend Mr. White, of Selborne. In the daytime, a colonial broker, in a chimney-pot hat, in Mincing-lane, in the evening, in a wide-awake hat, I ruralise down at my pleasant little cottage, at Oakhurst, near Dorking, and there, in a very humble cockney way, I have noted down now and then an observation or two on birds, beasts, and fishes, and other unconvertible fellow-creatures with whom, after the manner of my revered great-uncle, I have become, from time to time, more or less acquainted.

My little gable-ended cottage stands on a small platform of turf, looking down on one of the prettiest regions of Surrey. In that part of the county where the chalk hills suddenly melt into sand, and flow into long, richly-wooded valleys, the roofs of Oakhurst camped themselves as long ago as the time of the Saxons. Before me, about a mile off, the scarp slopes of Box Hill, as I write, brighten in the sunshine, while across the sunshine light shadows come and go delightfully. In the middle distance runs a green wave of elm-trees, partially hiding the town, from which the steeple rises like the lance of a picket per-

manently on guard. To the left the hills spread along towards Guildford and the Hog's Back, and in the veering sun and shade the light lands gleam, and the hanging woods darken in changing tones, which seem to vary, not only from hour to hour, but from moment to moment. On the nearest height above the town a huge square house, large as Aladdin's palace, rises among its tributary woods, sharp and clear in the sun of a July morning, but in autumn looking so dim and visionary, that I always look the first thing in the morning to see if it has flown away in the night. Down in the valley to the west, beyond those rich, chocolate-coloured fields, where the brass ornaments on the plough-horses glitter like gold, and beyond the ranges of tall, rolling, green corn and the park, is an old six-gabled, Jacobean house, full of old carved furniture and faded state; and a mile further spread the beech-woods of Wooton, where good Mr. Evelyn, of the Diary, once lived, and planted, and meditated. Through the centre of this valley runs the high road to Guildford (that white line to the right is the road), and level with it, part of the way, sweeps the railway. You see that puff of white cloud still lingering half-way up the hill? That is a contemptuous breath cast off by the express train that just dashed past, and is already five miles nearer Reading. Trains won't stop for you to study them; you must catch them flying. I may be a cockney in my admiration of simple natural beauties, which your countryman is too grand (I should say blasé) to observe; but this I will say, that at sunset, when all the valley is brimming with golden vapour, it is a sight to see that old gable-ended house floating like an ark on an enchanted sea.

My cottage is a mass of honeysuckle now, and dusty pedestrians stop to admire the countless rosy fingers that extend their welcome to the eager bees. My little platform of turf, where I always feel like the manager of a country show, or a candidate on a hustings, rises above a sunken road, and beyond is a fine park. As I look over the road, and on to this park, I naturally consider it mine. I get it rent free, I pay no keepers, and I have all the enjoyment of it, the pride, in fact, without the pains and perils of proprietorship. The park is, in fact, my park, and henceforth let it be so entitled.

Now, having thoroughly impressed the semi-rural character of Oakhurst upon my

reader's mind, let me descend, nay (pardon me, spirit of my venerable great uncle) rise to my small change in natural history and the daily life of my subordinate fellow-creatures. And first the squirrels. In this hot July weather, when the garden is brimming with black-red clove-pinks, and parti-coloured snap-dragons (whose mute mouths are made for show and not for use), and big standard roses that lift themselves to our noses (I did not mean this for rhyme), and glowing geraniums, that seem to have caught fire in the sun, and bushy calceolarias, and golden-orange ascolchias, sprung from the gold-beds of Mexico, and great clumps of Canterbury bells, the squirrels (gradually being chased away by builders and masons) do not honour the long row of oak, fir, ash, and acacia trees that fringes the road on the side of my park. But in autumn they visit us, and you see them, if alarmed, flying (it is as good as flying) from tree to tree in a manner that would make an acrobat die of envy. Of all wild creatures in England surely the squirrel is the most graceful, and the most delightfully capricious in its quick and fantastic gambols. One spring morning early I went out on my turf platform, and looking up saw on the long dry horizontal bough of an acacia on the borders of my park two squirrels in animated but somewhat controversial conversation. Hiding behind a tall dark *lignum-vitæ* bush, I watched the result. Presently the words grew higher. They began to make a sort of angry chattering noise, and no member who had voted contrary to the wish of his constituents ever had to struggle harder for his seat than my outside friend. Driven at last to the end of the branch by the older squirrel, a cross-looking senior with a light-coloured, almost grey, tail, over at last—after some clawing and reluctance—over he went. He came down with his tail spread out like a parachute (this gave me a new sense of the use of squirrels' bushy tails), and his paws extended. Out I dashed, keen as a moss-trooper to make him my prize; but, no, it was not by any means so easy to secure that mercurial creature. He was not half so stone dead as I thought he would be after his tremendous fall, but, on the contrary, darted into a hedge and up an ash-tree, as if such casualties were to him matters of daily occurrence. Catch him? Catch a swallow on the wing. In a moment he was off for the wood, literally flying from bough to bough. Surely if fairy ever assumed the shape of

an animal, a squirrel would be the very animal it would choose. Sometimes, too, I have come upon a squirrel in the woods, and just as it was raising its forepaws to climb a tree, it has turned and given me a half-scared, half-defiant look, very pretty to see. These squirrels, have, however, been stray adventurers, intruding on man's territory; but once or twice I have found myself a poacher on the squirrel's own kingdom, and have been, moreover, carefully informed of the fact, and as it were formally warned off.

One day last autumn, as I walked up the long winding hill that, beginning with fern and hazle-covered banks, ends with the heather ridges that form the base of Leith Hill, I was looking up at the green tent of beech leaves that covered the path, when I became aware of half a rough beech-nut pattering on my hat, then a second, then another. I looked up and saw that the trees were peopled with squirrels. There they were like ambushed fairies, hidden under the leaves, nibbling away or swinging back downwards, seriously grappling with a tuft of nuts. There, like sailor boys, they clung, and bit, and twined, happy as children out for a holiday.

I have a predilection for my black brothers—I refer to blackbirds. I like to see them on my lawn in the early morning puffing out their black velvet feathers with all the pride of persons working to support a large and young family. A beautiful bird is the cock blackbird, with his full suit of glossy black, varying in texture from the soft velvet of the neck and breast to the smooth satin of the wings and tail. What a clear, bold brown his eyes are! What a rich orange stains his strong, sharp beak! How he puffs out his feathers and struts, with his head erect and defiant, then suddenly bends down, and strikes at a retiring worm, which he draws forth, on the give-and-take principle, as cleverly as a fishmonger screws out a shrimp. He puts on his grand company manners for my lawn, and I hardly know him again when I see him in the fields, a fluttering fugitive, break out of a hedge and skim away with a chattering, chinking note, half angry, half frightened. Last year I noticed a hen blackbird constantly working in and out of a row of pollarded horn-beams that separate my garden from my neighbour's. Looking in among the twiled leaves of the hornbeam, I at last found the nest. It was untidily made in the usual way; but singularly enough the half-dry moss

and sprays of roots was made up with scraps and shreds of newspapers, such as errand-boys throw away from parcels of tea and candles, and that then blow like Sybilline leaves up and down our sandy lane. There was sticking out nearest to me a scrap of a love story from the Family Herald, with a short poem about moonlight preceding it, and on the other side I found a shred of a penny number of Dick Turpin. I had always thought that bird architecture never changed, advanced, or receded. I thought they always built nests on the same lines, and the same pattern. Yet here was a bird using entirely a new material, not because moss or tendrils were scarce, but because waste paper was more plentiful in the neighbourhood.

The choic of my blackbird's instinct was, however, by no means happy. The first heavy rain, after hatching, would have so soaked the nest as to kill all the young unfledged and chilly birds. It might have been the first nest of the young builder. The experiment, however, was never fairly tried, for one morning, when I went out to pace my platform before breakfast, I found the fragments of the nest in the rough hand of my occasional gardener, who had spied it while he was mowing. I often wonder if the poor bird persisted in her theoretical experiments.

The curative power of nature is well illustrated by an anecdote of an accident that happened some years ago to Bronte, a bloodhound that belongs to me. The dog was in that lolling hobbledehoy state of cubhood when eating and rough play are the whole ends of existence. A great, clumsy, weak-legged monster it was, not a bit like the solid, stern, sagacious creature it now is. One day, when the butcher brought the meat for Bronte, I took it from the rosy, blue-coated varlet, and carried it to the kennel, where the dog was growling for it like a great, greedy schoolboy. All at once Bronte made a rush at the trailing meat, and snapping it from me, skewer and all, dragged it into his kennel, and set to work at once, growling and ravening. I had forgotten all about the matter, when nearly two months afterwards I one day noticed a lump on Bronte's right side which he from time to time licked, moaning as he licked. I had before this noticed that Bronte had looked rather peaky and sickly, and did not lumber about with his usual rough playfulness. I felt the lump, and found it pointed and hard; the top without hair, and sore. All that week, whenever I saw

Bronte, he was lying down at every spare moment, licking his side uneasily. Very soon the wound developed into a complete hole, which at once vexed and puzzled us. One day the butcher-boy aforementioned came with Bronte's food, laid the dog on his side, and examined the wound with more than usual care. He declared he saw something at the bottom of the wound which he thought he could draw out if he only had a pair of pincers. Pincers were at once sent for, and, the dog being held, he soon laid open the wound, and drew from it, to our intense astonishment, a wooden skewer nearly a foot long. It was the skewer that had pinned together the lump of meat which Bronte had snatched from us nearly two months before.

Nature had been a great medicine man here. The dog must have gulped down the whole string of meat in two or three mouthfuls, and have swallowed the skewer with it. The skewer, which went down straight, must have turned in the stomach, pierced one of the entrails, and worked out at the dog's side. Only a vigorous young dog could have endured all the agony of that struggle, and have survived the perforation of the various tissues through which the skewer must have passed; certain, however, it is that the dog (one of the Duke of Grafton's breed) soon recovered; it went on licking the wound closed, the animal's eyes grew brighter, its spirits returned, and in a fortnight it was gambolling about clumsily and vigorously as ever. Perhaps in the days of Methuselah the flesh of man, when cut or pierced, healed up as rapidly as this.

Oakhurst is celebrated, among other things, for a gigantic race of snails. Tradition says they all sprang from certain snails sent from Italy, to be used as food by a lady who was dying of consumption. I sometimes meet them half-way up the Oakhurst hills, crossing the paths, or down under the juniper bushes, where I have sometimes seen the common green snake basking, and where the large painted butterflies flutter and hover over the patches of wild thyme blossom. The snails are certainly very large, brown-striped fellows, and no doubt, in batter, would form a dish fit for a French king. But our Oakhurst country people have not yet discovered the culinary virtues of the snail. Apropos of snails: the other day, in Cumberland, I happened to bark my shins clambering up a scaur out otter-hunting, and I asked the wiry old huntsman what was the best thing

to put to the sore places. He replied in the racy vernacular:

"What thee do? Why, just seek oot a big black snail, and let him crawl o'er't; and, 'gage me waired, thou'lt find nae mair harm o't."

I did not adopt the receipt, but the rough remedy was, perhaps, after all, not contemptible, for the mediæval doctors were in the habit of mixing pounded snails with their plasters. In wet weather the snails creep by dozens out of my fernery, and shoot out their long, waving horns, and drag their greenish fleshy bodies up every plant they come near, seeking for Heaven only knows what description of invisible food.

The owls, too, at Oakhurst are fellow-creatures I delight to observe. I often see a white owl under the elm-trees in my park, fluttering about in the dusk like a great white moth. The hooting of the common brown owl here is not at all the "tu-whit tu-whoo" of the poet, but rather a long whistling hoot, with a prolonged accent on the last syllable. For a whole year I used to fancy it was the keepers, or their boys, whistling signals to each other in the beech-woods. Frequently in the summer evenings I see a brown owl hovering down the park hedge, silent as a spirit, and no cry or flap from him disturbs the restless field-mice he is seeking in his noiseless flight. A more perfectly ghostly, nocturnal bird could scarcely be imagined, nor one more thoroughly adapted for the pursuit it practises.

Perhaps of all birds that love the society of man, I most affect the fly-catcher and the dish-washer. One of the former race has built for years in a little nook of honeysuckle boughs over my library window. The nest fits like an egg-cup in the socket formed by two or three transverse branches. On the edge of a wire umbrella, clustered with the yellow canariensis, in the middle of my lawn, the cock bird perches all day like a custom-house officer waiting for tolls; and many a disagreeable fine does he extract from flies carelessly flitting about in the sunshine. It is astonishing with what patience he watches, with what unerring skill he swoops like a hawk on his prey, and bears it off in triumph to the little chattering jury that sit up expectant in the adjacent nest. The dish-washer is a more graceful and feminine bird, gay, restless, and volatile, coquettish in its movements, with a little mincing walk and run like a French grisette, yet Quaker-like in the

colour of its feathers. It is "marvellous pretty," as Pepys would have said, to watch the bird run across the lawn, flashing its long tail, and darting at a casual fly in the slyest and most unerring way, fluttering itself after each mouthful with saucy triumph, with that circular motion of the tail by which it has earned its vulgar name.

Nightingales were tamer and more common six years ago, when I first came to Oakhurst, than they are now. The new villas slowly drive them further back into the country. I remember the first day my wife and I arrived, the baker's boy informed me condescendingly that a nightingale built every year in a large ivy-hung elm half-way down the lane that leads to the station; but, as a month or two later I saw a knot of errand-boys pelting that very tree with all the persistency of besiegers of a town, I conclude the nightingale, if it survived the volleys of stones, at once decamped, for I never heard the minstrel of night again in that part of Oakhurst.

I need scarcely say, as the sand meets the chalk in our region, and drives before its fluid masses the stubborn clay seawards (for through a gap of the hills a white sail can sometimes be seen at certain special hours), we swarm with rabbits. Unconscious of fricassee, careless of curry, and heedless of pie, they dart, and trot, and race up and down our fern-covered knolls, though the quick crack of a gun, morning and evening, is often, indeed, the knell of their sudden decease. It is the prettiest sight in the world, on a summer afternoon, to watch them from behind a golden whin-bush at play along the edge of a fox-covert. They creep out, run races, and jump in the air in pure childish enjoyment of life, thoughtless of keeper, terrier, or gun. No one knows the rabbit's animal spirits and exuberant playfulness who has not seen this sight.

A word before I close on my fishy fellow-creatures at Oakhurst. Perch abound in the Willowfleet stream, great, big, pugnacious-looking fellows, orange and black, whose back fin, a fan of spikes, is up in a moment when they are angry. A keeper here once found a large pike dead with one of these well-armed perch dead in its throat, the fins having pierced through the pike, so that the perch, after all, is not unprovided with armour against its dreaded antagonist, the river wolf. Before a thunder-storm, when the air is heavy and leaden grey, and the lungs almost refuse to carry

on business, these perch rise at the bait of a little red brandling with such absurd eagerness that I really sometimes believe they are eager to be fried a light brown to see how that colour would suit their complexion. Any bait, even the eye of your last-caught fish (when your worms run short), does capitally to attract his unnatural young brother. As for the monster roach, sluggish and stupid, yet sometimes stubborn, they lurk in hidden numbers just by the one-arch bridge at the Castle Mills.

The pike of Oakhurst have been celebrated for generations. What savage greedy tyrants of the stream pike are! Surely, in a former state they must have been Jew money-lenders, or Custom-house officers, Emperor Napoleons, or Communists. Shoals of silvery young dace they bolt in a day. I have known them almost leap on shore in their eagerness to swallow the juvenile minnow I proffered them, and on one occasion an old lord mayor pike got his ravenous teeth fixed in my float, and I drew him out, availing myself of his misconception, and afterwards baked him, with innocent herbs stuffed into his interior machinery. The pike lurk under the willows, and particularly by those floating water lilies, whose shining eel-like roots anchor in the river bed just where a poor lad was drowned last year while bathing.

Eels, too, those water-serpents, are numerous in the Willowfleet. At any moment you may see the air-bubbles that indicate their presence winding up to the surface, but they are sluggish biters, and nibble artfully at the safe end of the worm. When they do emerge on your hook they twist and wind like snakes, and are only too likely to creep back into the friendly river even when landed and apparently yours for ever. They take a great deal of killing, and I feel somewhat like a murderer when at last they lie before me deep notched behind the neck and quiet at last.

The kingfisher is not often seen on the Willowfleet, but in the pebbly shallows it sometimes casts a momentary rainbow of colour across the stream, or dives with the rapidity of light, and emerges with its tiny prey. The otter is sometimes seen gnawing at stolen fish on a ledge of the bank, but this is very rarely. A moorhen now and then scuds about the river-side meadows like a bedraggled wild chicken, and the water-rat swims between the bullrushes and forget-me-nots to some spit of land where his spouse and infants await the hour of dinner; and so, like different sets of people in a

country town, these motley and varied fellow-creatures of mine share the Willow-fleet and its banks between them.

### DER FREISCHÜTZ.

"OF course," remarked Maximilian, "you are familiar with the plot of Weber's opera, *Der Freischütz*?"

"Certainly," replied Laurence. "Kind, the author of the libretto, founded it upon a story written by Apel, as one of a collection of tales, which was very popular about half a century ago, and was called, I think, the *Wunderbuch*, or *Book of Wonders*. He so far departed from Apel that he made the piece end happily, instead of terminating it with the death of the bride."

"My reason for referring to the subject," proceeded Maximilian, "is this, that although the figure of a *Freischütz*, that is to say, a hunter who derives his skill from the black art, is common enough in the annals of German superstition, the precise condition of the charmed bullets in the opera seem to have been devised by modern imagination only, and to have no foundation in popular belief."

"Let me see," said Edgar, counting his fingers; "the bullets were to be cast at midnight, and in addition to lead—let me be accurate—some broken glass from a church window, some quicksilver, three bullets that had already hit the mark, the left eye of a lynx, and the right eye of an owl, were to enter into the composition."

"All mere fancy!" ejaculated Maximilian.

"Nay," objected Laurence, "if we criticise such minute details, we shall never accept any record of a tradition whatever. No one supposes, I imagine, that the long list of ingredients mentioned by the witches in *Macbeth*, was derived by Shakespeare from a recipe bequeathed by some actual sorceress. Nevertheless, we may opine that the deeds and words of the weird sisters represent a state of popular belief, according to which ill-favoured hags prepared charms in a cauldron, compounding them of ingredients of an evil nature."

"And that such a belief existed even in the times of antiquity, not, however, implying that a witch was necessarily old or ill-favoured, is known to every schoolboy," exclaimed Edgar. "What are you driving at, Maximilian?"

"I perceive that I spoke a little too soon," said Maximilian. "So pass over the foul ingredients which compose what Shake-

speare calls the 'gruel,' and come to the particular property of the bullets cast in the opera. They must be seven in number, and the first six that are fired off will obey the will of the marksman, whereas the seventh is subjected to the direction of the fiend *Zamiel*, who in Apel's tale uses it to kill the huntsman's bride."

"True," said Laurence, "and this exceptional distinction of the seventh bullet gives an exceptional character to the story. In most traditions respecting compacts with powers of darkness, we find the human bargainer selling his hope of salvation to the Fiend, but here the right to direct the seventh bullet seems to be a sufficient price for the Evil One's assistance."

"The peculiarity is indeed interesting," observed Edgar.

"The peculiarity would be extremely interesting," said Maximilian, "if we could trace it to popular tradition; but unfortunately we cannot do anything of the kind. Doctor Grässe, a most laborious collector of legends, especially of those connected with the chase, declares in his *Hunter's Breviary* (*Jäger-Brevier*) that in all his researches he has never found a legend of a *Freischütz* in which such a distinction is assigned to a particular bullet. He therefore supposes that it had its origin in the imagination of Apel."

"And a very clever fellow Apel must have been," exclaimed Laurence.

"The genuine legends of the *Freischütz*—that is to say, the Free-shooter, who is sometimes called the *Freijäger* or Free-hunter—are far less complicated. Thus we read of a hunter who lived near *Ravenberg*, in *Baden*, towards the end of the last century, and was never known to miss a mark. This power he had acquired, it was thought, by kneeling on a cloth and firing three free-shots—one at the sun, another at the moon, and the third at heaven itself. Three drops of blood had fallen from the sky in consequence, and after death the spirit of the hunter haunted the forest until it was exorcised into a sack. Similar in principle is the legend of the so-called *Eternal Hunter* of *Trendenstadt*, in the *Wurtemberg* territory, who on either Christmas or Good Friday fired at the sun, and collected in a handkerchief the blood which fell. With this he anointed his bullets, and thus rendered them sure of hitting any mark he chose. When his stock was exhausted he shot again at the sun, and obtained a new supply. He also used to wander after his death."

"The second of these legends," remarked Edgar, "is more complete than the first, in which the blood is turned to no account."

"I may add," said Maximilian, "that balls anointed in the manner just described are, in popular language, termed 'Blut-kugeln,' or 'Blood-bullets.' It is believed that if one of these is, without aim, fired into a forest where there is only a single deer, the animal will be hit, though perhaps its body may never be found. If there be no deer whatever in the forest, the bullet will strike the hunter."

"Is not this something like an adumbration of our poor seventh bullet, that we have treated so disdainfully?" suggested Laurence. "In both cases the ball operates to the detriment of him who uses it."

"True; but the similarity goes a very little way," returned Maximilian. "In my Wirtemberg legend there is no notice that any one bullet is distinct from the others."

"And, after all, if we look closely at the opera," pursued Laurence, "I don't think we shall find that distinction there that we have hastily assumed. If I understand Kind's libretto right, the fatal bullet is the seventh which is fired, not the seventh which has been cast. Before they are used the bullets are all alike, and it is only the order of their use that gives one of them a distinctive character. So, in the case of your Wirtemberg forest, the charmed bullet that hit the hunter is not intrinsically more mischievous than any of the others. Now, it seems to me that, between a bullet which does mischief because it is fired in accordance with a certain prescribed order, and a bullet which works evil, but even without certain prescribed conditions being observed, the analogy is not so very remote."

"Hear, hear!" cried Edgar.

"I must confess," observed Maximilian, smiling, "that Laurence has fought well for his client. Now, here is a legend, which I do not precisely understand. At Lerbuch, in the Harz Mountains, there was a noted marksman, who, when a shooting-match was held, always aimed last, and carried off the prize. On one occasion he suspected that some trick would be played upon him, and warned the company that in that case mischief would probably ensue. When he had pointed his gun three targets were before his eyes instead of one; so, not knowing at which he should aim, he fired at random, whereupon the man who had caused the illusion, and who was standing behind him, fell down, shot through the heart."

"Here, indeed, we go out of the beaten track," said Edgar. "Was one conjuror opposed to another, and did the owner of a magic bullet get the better of the contriver of a magic target?"

"Perhaps so," replied Maximilian, "or perhaps we are to believe that honest merit prevailed against the black art. Here, however, is a trial of skill of the kind to which you refer. A nobleman in the neighbourhood of Münster owned extensive forests, and one day the forester who superintended them was found dead, evidently killed by a bullet that had entered the middle of his forehead. Another, who was engaged to fill his place, came to the same untimely end, so did a third, so did a fourth, until no one cared to accept so dangerous a situation, and the forest was left unguarded. At last a fierce-looking fellow presented himself as a candidate for the vacancy, and was gladly accepted by the nobleman, who was, however, honest enough to warn him of the danger to which he would be exposed. The stranger laughed at the very notion of fear, vowing that he knew forest tricks as well as any one in the world, and that those who tried to play them upon him would certainly meet their match. On the following day he entered the forest accompanied by several hunters; but no sooner had he set his foot within its precincts than the report of a gun was heard in the distance. The forester, on the alert, flung his hat into the air, and when this fell down it had been pierced by a bullet, just where it would have touched the middle of the wearer's forehead. Swearing that he would return the compliment, the forester now fired apparently at random, and then plunged into the wood followed by his companions, who were anxious to see the result of such an extraordinary proceeding. When they had gone completely through the forest, they came to a mill, and there they found the miller dead, shot through the middle of the forehead. He had been himself a 'free-shooter,' and had used his art in order to poach at pleasure without interference, but the new forester had been too much for him. Indeed, of all the 'free-shooters' on record, this seems to have been the most skilful. It is said that he could charm birds into his bag, and by a strange fascination cause deer to stand still where they could most conveniently be shot."

"I should have thought that to him all places were alike," remarked Edgar. "He must have been a valuable servant."

"Nay, talent does not always meet its deserts," said Maximilian. "His noble master thought him rather too clever, and contrived on some pretext to get rid of him with all possible speed. By the way, the power of fascinating beasts is ascribed to a certain John, who was in the service of one of the landgraves of Hesse, and who, like Sir Huon of Bordeaux, owned a magic horn. The landgrave was much less scrupulous than the nobleman of Münster; for whenever he went shooting, he took John as his companion, and desired him to sound his horn, which he always did to good purpose."

"All the stories you have told," remarked Edgar, "treat of a power of taking a sure aim, acquired by supernatural agency. Is there not another parallel series of tales turning on invulnerability acquired by similar means?"

"Of course you mean something more modern than the myths of Achilles and Siegfried, or the fabulous records of the Paladins," said Laurence.

"Yes, something that represents what we consider a popular superstition," returned Edgar.

"You may have remarked that in the Münster legend the wild forester who kills the miller is able to save himself by throwing up his hat," suggested Maximilian. "It seems as if certainty of hitting and security against being hit were naturally associated with each other."

"I can tell you a story which dates from the seventeenth century, and by which that view is confirmed," said Laurence. "Erdmann Fischer, a sexton of Magdeburg, became acquainted, it appears, with a drummer in the imperial army, whose skin was proof against lead and steel, and expressed a wish to be in the same desirable condition. Hereupon the drummer gave him a paper inscribed with all sorts of strange characters, which he was to take with him to the foot of the gallows at midnight. This he did, and the Evil One appearing to him in the dress of a fine gentleman, asked if he was willing to enter his service, and vanished on receiving an answer in the affirmative. On the following midnight the sexton repaired to the same spot, and was greeted by the same awful personage, who asked him if he continued in the same mind."

"He gave the poor wretch a chance of retracting," observed Edgar, "clearly illustrating the proverb which tells us that he is not as black as he is painted."

"The sexton having again answered in

the affirmative," continued Laurence, "a compact was easily made, to the effect that he should enter into the service of the Fiend, who in return should make him invulnerable, and allow him three free shots."

"That is to say, the certainty of hitting a mark on three occasions," interposed Maximilian. "Observe how the two privileges go together. And the association is here the more remarkable, inasmuch as the story has nothing to do with hunting."

"As the sexton was no great scholar," proceeded Laurence, "the Fiend was satisfied when he pricked his wrist with a pin, and wrote the initial letters of his name with three crosses on a scrap of paper, and on the following Good Friday brought him a box of green salve, by anointing himself with which he would become altogether invulnerable. At first he turned his gift to good account, and effectively aided his fellow-citizens in an expedition against some marauders attached to the imperial cause, who had devastated the fields in the neighbourhood of the great Protestant city."

"I see the story occurs in the time of the Thirty Years' War," observed Maximilian.

Laurence nodded assent and continued. "During the skirmish that ensued, the sexton was struck in the middle of the chest by a bullet, which left a black mark, but could not penetrate the skin. The mark was noticed by his wife, who threatened to reveal her discovery to her father confessor, but the menaces on the other side were so strong, that she deemed it advisable to remain silent."

"I think we ought to observe," interposed Maximilian, "that we have before us two distinct kinds of invulnerability. The sexton, anointed with green salve, is precisely in the condition of Achilles and Siegfried. He can be hit but not hurt. On the other hand, the Münster forester was not hit at all, having the power to divert a bullet from its intended course."

"The sexton soon went to the bad," proceeded Laurence; "he became a hard drinker, scoffed at his wife when she taught the children to pray, and even assisted in the robbery of a poor-box. All this was done for the benefit of his terrible master, and sometimes, in cool moments, he would reflect whether there might not be some method to escape from a bondage which was becoming more and more oppressive. He had a notion that by communicating

his secret to others he might induce the Fiend to accept them as a substitute for himself."

"And he was by no means singular in his notions," remarked Edgar. "The position of the two free-shooters in the opera is based on precisely the same belief."

"We have a still stranger instance, in the popular story of the Bottle Imp," said Maximilian, "where the mere sale of the bottle transfers all accompanying perils and advantages to the purchaser."

"All the sexton's endeavours to free himself proved vain," continued Laurence. "In the spring of 1636 his master gave him some grey powder, which he was to sprinkle about the streets of Magdeburg, and thus cause a pestilence. Conscience not being quite dead, the wretched man threw the greater part of the powder into the Elbe, but the plague broke out nevertheless, and extended to the neighbouring provinces. Twenty years afterwards he was ordered by a rough voice, with which he was only too familiar, to dig up the body of an infant which had been buried in St. Peter's churchyard on that very day, and to make from its limbs a powder, which would cause a return of the pestilence. With this order he complied, the Fiend being constantly near him, in the shape of a black rat, to give him more particular instructions. However, here his evil career came to an end, for his crime was discovered, and—we know the very day—on the 26th of October, 1657, he was broken on the wheel."

"Good," exclaimed Edgar; "and thus we have one of the many cases of trial for witchcraft which were the disgrace of Europe."

#### LETTY DORMER.

"I would rather die!" said Letty, passionately.

"Just so, my dear; all young girls would rather die than give up an unsubstantial fancy for a profitable reality. In general, however, they do give it up, and they do not die," answered her mother, quietly.

"Mamma, how cruel you are!" cried the girl, with a kind of angry despair in her voice.

"Because I am rational? How cruel you are, you ought rather to say, Letty, to give me so much trouble when I am acting only for your own good; and when you know that you will have to yield at last."

"I will not yield—I will die first," repeated Letty.

"You are very fond of that assertion, my dear; but it does not move me. I know so well that you will marry as I wish you to do, and live into quite a respectable old age. You are healthy, though you do not come of a long-lived family on one side." She sighed—it was a conventional sigh—and then she faintly murmured, "Poor papa!"

"Oh, mamma! you are too dreadful with your cold sarcasms," cried Letty, flinging up her hands.

"And you are too silly with your mock heroics, my dear. If you had not me to guide you into common sense, what a mess you would make of your life!"

"What a wreck you wish to make it!" cried Letty.

"Silly little girl," said Mrs. Dormer, with compassionate contempt. "You are like a naughty child who will thrust its hand into the fire, and thinks its nurse abominably cruel because she tries to prevent it. The day will come, my dear, when you will thank me, instead of scolding me as you are doing now, that I put an end to this absurd affair with Mr. Ratcliffe, and gave you such an admirable settlement in Mr. Mounsey."

"Admirable settlement! A man old enough to be my father—a man I hate, and that no girl could like—only with money."

"And, having money, with all that a portionless girl can desire and more than she has a right to expect," said Mrs. Dormer, taking up a few dropped stitches leisurely.

"Oh, I know you don't think it necessary for a wife to love her husband," said Letty, sarcastically.

"To begin with?—by no means, my dear," answered her mother, with perfect good breeding and good temper. "Love comes by habit, by the fact of a pleasant home where there is no stint, and where everything goes on comfortably. One man is very much the same as another man, when you know them; and, with a moderate amount of amiability, a well-principled girl is sure to be happy if she is properly provided for."

"Your opinions are absolutely monstrous, and I will have nothing to do with them," said Letty, angrily.

"Only to fulfil them, little goose, when you have worked off the froth," Mrs. Dormer returned the answer with a slight laugh; and the servant at that moment flung open the door with an air, and ushered in—"Mr. Mounsey."

A short, thick-set, irascible-looking man, with grizzled hair cropped close, broad bushy eyebrows, and that kind of moustache and whiskers run together about a clean-shaven chin which gives such a wild-beast expression to a face; a confident, aggressive, unsympathetic-looking man; a man to push his own way in the world without regard to those he shouldered aside, and to hold his own let who would want; a man to be wary of in business, and with whom it would be necessary to be cautious how one made him friend or foe; a man strong in his own right, and standing four-square in his own esteem; but, as Letty said, a man whom no girl could love. This was the wealthy Mr. Mounsey, who had been pleased to cast eyes of admiration on portionless Letty Dormer, and to demand her of her mother as his wife and the mistress of Mounsey Park. And Mrs. Dormer had promised, in spite of that "little folly" with George Ratcliffe, which she had encouraged eagerly enough when no better chances were on hand.

As he came in, his somewhat cruel face lighted up with a kind of masterful smile of pleasure, Mrs. Dormer rose and welcomed him; but Letty sat pale and rebellious, not fearful or trembling, not shrinking or shy, but with a look of set purpose, of undisguised hostility on her face, which her very pallor and rigidity seemed to intensify. Mr. Mounsey wisely ignored all unpleasant signs. His cue was to refer Letty's resistance to the coy reserve of maidenly modesty. Girls never know their own minds, not to speak of their best interests; he and Mrs. Dormer were fully agreed on that point; and as he had mamma's consent, he thought it waste of force to attempt an argument with the girl herself; trusting to patient holding on to his point, the dazzle of his riches, and her mother's influence, for a happy issue out of all his perplexities.

"To their like," he said curtly, if gallantly, going straight up to Letty and offering her an open case containing a costly set of pearls.

"For me? Thank you, no," said Letty, coldly.

"It is usual, my dear Miss Dormer," answered Mr. Mounsey. He had not got yet to the length of calling her Letty—he had tried it once, and he had not repeated it.

"Usual to what?" said Letty, raising her eyes to him. "I know of nothing which should make such a present from you to me usual or possible."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Dormer, sweetly, "it seems to me you are rather wandering to-day. The heat probably," with an apologetic turn of her head to her future son-in-law.

"Probably," said that gentleman, a little fiercely; "but I own I should like to hear something more satisfactory from the young lady herself. All this coyness is very well up to a certain point; beyond that it is tiresome and annoying."

"It will all come right in time," said Mrs. Dormer, blandly.

"Never!" cried Letty.

"Silly little puss," said her mother; but her look was not so playful as her words.

"Mamma, why will you force this hateful pretence on me?" cried Letty, with tearful passion. "You know I will never be Mr. Mounsey's wife."

"My dear young lady, I can wait," cried Mr. Mounsey, suddenly changing his tone of annoyance to one of the blandest, most flattering tenderness. "And if I have to wait for the beautiful Miss Dormer as long as that old fellow in the Bible waited for his wife, I will. I have to conquer in the end, and you have to be my wife."

"Never!" said Letty.

"He is doing you too much honour, Letty," said Mrs. Dormer, severely.

"Honour!" she repeated, scornfully.

"Do you call insolence and tyranny honour?"

And with this she rose and left the room; and Mrs. Dormer and Mr. Mounsey looked at each other not comfortably.

Poor and genteel, Mrs. Dormer prided herself on her birth and breeding. "Noblesse oblige" was her favourite motto, though there were some who said that her nobility was only a holiday garment worn for show, the obligations of which extended no farther than to kid gloves and silver fish-knives. Still, she was a lady; and as such she shrank from all things vulgar, perhaps more than from things sinful. And one of the strophes in her litany of praise over Mr. Mounsey was that, although he was confessedly a self-made man, he was not vulgar. Also, that he had no family belonging to him to show the rougher side of the web from which he, and they, had been originally made. All that was known of him, or, rather, all that he chose to say of himself, was, that he had been an Eastern merchant somewhere—locality not exactly defined—and that the result was, Mounsey Park. And Mrs. Dormer sagely concluded to look no closer, and ask no more.

Down in the village lived one Will Cobbold, a slippery, clever ne'er-do-weel, a carpenter by trade, a mechanician by genius, generally supposed to be capable of anything to which he chose to turn his hand, but who had drunk away all his chances as fast as they had offered themselves, gradually passing from bad to worse till he was now the warning example held up as a moral scarecrow by parents and advisers. Will had a tidy kind of wife, poor body, and a son—a decent fellow enough—who, partly because the bad name of his father clung to him in the old place, partly because he liked rambling for its own sake, had gone off on his travels, until he had cast anchor in a small village in Wales. Its precise name does not signify. It was made up of a couple of ll's, as many r's, with a y and a w as the floating power. No one in Market Hill knew much about it, anyhow. Least of all did Mr. Mounsey of Mounsey Park trouble himself to learn where young Will Cobbold, the drunken carpenter's son, had bestowed himself.

As for old Will, he and Mr. Mounsey were always at twos, as the neighbours said. As a Christian the gentleman reproached the loose habits of the workman: as a magistrate he fined them, and that heavily. So that Will's days were, at this time, exceptionally evil, and his heart towards the new magnate of the district was bitter.

He wrote out his griefs to his son at the unpronounceable Welsh village; and expressed, as his private opinion, that "Miss Letty Dormer, of the Cottage, who was going to be his wife, and Mr. Ratcliffe put aside as if he had been nothing better nor a dummy, would have her hands full when she got the old Radical; and that she had better think twice afore she did what no one in the world could undo when did."

This letter young Will read to his wife Mary, as he sat by the fireside with her and her mother, not a month after his marriage.

"What Mounsey may that be?" asked Mrs. Jones, Mary's mother. "I was a Mounsey myself afore I saw poor Jones."

"Don't know," said young Will, "more nor he be a mainly rich gentleman as hav' been in the East somewheres; but no one knows much about him."

"His name mayn't be three M's—Morley Magnus?" asked Mrs. Jones in a vague way.

"Ay, that I know it is," said Will; "and many's the good laugh we've had over it in the town."

"Why, mother!" cried Mary, who had turned quite pale.

"Ay, lass, I know what you'd say," said her mother, rising, and speaking in an excited manner. "As sure as you're born that's the uncle you've heard me speak of so often! Will Cobbold, that Mounsey yonder in his fine park is my brother. There can't be another such name in the world; for father, he called him Morley Magnus after his two godfathers, the chemist and the draper of Herket. You see if your gentleman don't come from Herket in the Forest, you see if he don't. He went to foreign parts better nor twenty years ago. He was as clever as you please, but always a close gripe; and, if you'll believe me, he has never once wrote home since he heard that poor father died, and mother and me was in trouble, and he was asked to help with a few pounds; and he rolling in riches, as one may say."

"Well, mother," said Will, "suppose we give them all a start at the old place, and travel there unexpected? I reckon our fine gentleman won't be quite so down on father when his own niece has got his son, hey, Mary?"

"Not much of a get," said Mary, saucily.

But Will gave her one for her impertinence, and they cried quits over the punishment.

The preparations for Letty's marriage with the rich possessor of Mounsey Park were still going on in a languid, intermittent sort of way: the girl protesting, the mother insisting, the man persevering, and expressing himself confident as to the future. Meanwhile, George Ratcliffe came back to Market Hill; and his presence, while it comforted Letty, served to make all things more confused. His firm refusal to be dismissed on anything short of her expressed desire, and Mrs. Dormer's as firm refusal to allow of his pretensions, made a kind of tumult in the place which set every one talking. But no one knew the exact rights of the case. All that was certain was, that there was a hitch somewhere; that Letty looked miserably ill, and George Ratcliffe miserably unhappy; and that of the whole of the quartette concerned, Mr. Mounsey of Mounsey Park was the only one who kept any appearance of content, or who seemed, as the doctor said, as if he could eat a mutton chop without choking. He never spoke to any one in confidence. He was not the kind of man to give his confidence. But he often said, as a matter of course, to his neighbours, "When I am married, I will

do so and so;" "That must wait till we have come back from our tour;" "When I have my wife at Mounsey Park, this and that will be better arranged;" all said in the quietest and most positive tone imaginable, the tone of a man who, as he himself said, "rode to win."

One day Letty was sitting in the little morning-room, to which latterly she had retreated as a place of refuge, her mother having the fine lady's natural disinclination to sit in anything but the drawing-room. Here she was hiding in sad mood enough, thinking over her position, and wondering how she should get out of the net that was being daily drawn more closely round her, when her mother came in.

"Letty," she said, abruptly; "things have come to a crisis, and now you must decide our future."

"Mamma! I have decided!" answered Letty, with her weary air. "Why will you torture me so cruelly?"

"The cruelty has not been on my side," said her mother. "I said so once before, and I say so now again."

"It would be hard to make me believe that," said Letty.

"So? then, I must tell you the whole truth. Listen, Letty; if you had been obedient, and had done as you ought, you need never have known it. I owe Mr. Mounsey several thousands of pounds; and if you do not marry him he will proceed against me. That is all. It is simply a question of our utter ruin—yours and mine together, Letty—or your consenting to be his wife. Now, I leave my fate in your hands."

"You mean in fact, mamma, that you have sold me to this man," said Letty, with a strained unnatural calmness; "and that I must pay the price—by myself?"

"You may call it what you like, Letty; but why choose such unpleasant terms? The fact is the only thing to be dealt with; unfortunately for us both."

"Unfortunately—yes, indeed!" sighed Letty, still with that fixed, strained look. "But I must speak to George. I can do nothing, say nothing, without him."

"I don't see much good in going to him for advice," said her mother, irritably. "It is your affair, not his."

"Mamma!" remonstrated Letty.

"Well, my dear, so it is. The question is one which you alone can answer. Will you marry Mr. Mounsey, or must I be ruined and rendered penniless for the remainder of my life? That you have no love for me, I know—"

Here Letty raised her large grey eyes with a plaintive look, saying, in a deprecatory manner, "Mamma, I do love you! You know that I do!"

"But," continued Mrs. Dormer, in a martyr-spirit, sweetly self-forgetful, "if you have no love for me, you surely have some kind of family pride; you would scarcely like your father's name (you loved him) to be dragged through the mire, as it must be."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" cried poor Letty, breaking down in sobs and tears, "do not mention poor papa's name in the business, there is sacrilege enough in it without that!"

"You are hard on me, Letty," said Mrs. Dormer, tears in her eyes too, "but perhaps I have deserved it; and if it will make matters better for you—I am sorry for you, my poor child!" she added, with a genuine burst of feeling rare in her.

Then the two women, the ice broken, clasped in each others arms, sobbed out their grief in concert which at least destroyed the coldness that had sprung up between them, and made them partners in suffering, not, as formerly, antagonists and enemies.

While they were sitting there, both feeling the sacredness if the anguish of the moment, the servant came to tell them that Mr. Mounsey was in the drawing-room, the time of his daily visit having arrived.

"Letty, what am I to say to him?" asked Mrs. Dormer, drying her eyes, yet still weeping; "am I to tell him yes or no? He has come for his final answer to-day, and I dare not put him off any longer."

"I cannot, mamma, till I have seen George," sobbed Letty. "If it is only a question of this money, George may help us. So long as I thought you wanted me to marry for a settlement only I did not mind refusing you; and I could not put George forward; I could only remain true to him, and hope for the future; but if it is money that can be paid off, mamma, if he can raise the sum you want, will not this set you free? and then will you not release me?"

"Certainly, if I could get out of the man's debt I would not press you, my dear. But it would be a splendid provision for you!" said Mrs. Dormer, regretfully, looking back to the flesh-pots. "You must come yourself now, Letty; I dare not face him alone any more. Ah, my child, you little know what my life has been of late between you both," she added, shuddering.

"I will go with you, mamma," said Letty,

resolutely. "From me, at least, he shall learn the truth."

And they went together, arm-in-arm; the two who had been so long estranged suddenly become friends.

"I augur well from this happy companionship," said Mr. Mounsey, gallantly, as the two women entered the room. "Is my term of probation at last come to an end?"

This last was addressed to Letty, with a tender air that accorded ill with his fierce and fervid face.

"I have just heard that mamma owes you money," said Letty, plunging into the heart of the matter at a bound.

"A mere nothing, my dear."

"Don't call me dear, sir!" interrupted Letty angrily.

"Indeed, absolutely nothing—not so much as a cobweb between Mrs. Dormer and her son-in-law: rather a large sum, I confess, between Mrs. Dormer of the Cottage and Mr. Mounsey of Mounsey Park. You see I am a man of business, my dear young lady—pardon the slip, it would come—and though prepared to do all that is handsome by my relation, not prepared to give away my money to individuals who have no claim on me. Don't you see the justice of this for yourself?"

"Yes," said Letty, straightly. "Then the whole thing is a mere matter of money. If I can get this loan of yours to mamma paid off I shall hold myself free from the promise she has made for me. If I cannot—"

"This, my charming Letty, will be a receipt in full of all demands," interrupted Mr. Mounsey, taking her hand in his, and forcibly kissing it. She wiped it with her handkerchief immediately after, with an air of the deepest disgust; and the man's fierce face took a dark look it was well she did not see.

At this moment there passed the window which gave on to the drive, a group of four; two of whom were men, and two were women. The men were the Cobbolds, old and young Will, both dressed in their Sunday best, and both sober; which, for the elder of the two, was a blessed privilege becoming daily rarer. The women were Mrs. Jones from Wales, and her daughter Mary. The front door stood open, as is so often the case in the country, where there is neither fear nor danger, and the party entered the hall without knocking. They did however knock at the drawing-room door; and then they all entered.

"Who in Heaven's name are you all, and

what do you want? Cobbold! young William!" cried Mrs. Dormer, angrily.

"Morley Magnus! brother Morley Magnus!" said Mrs. Jones in a tearful voice, wiping her eyes with her shawl. And, "Well uncle, and how are you?" said Mary, who was a pert young woman in her way.

Then Mrs. Jones fell on his neck and kissed him, and Mary took his hand and shook it heartily, sideways.

"Who are these lunatics?" said Mr. Mounsey, with a fine air of disdain. He did not start, nor blush, nor show any other emotion than that of surprise tempered with pity and contempt.

"Your own sister, sir," said old Will.

"My wife, Mr. Mounsey," chimed in the younger man: and Mary, with her head in the air, repeated airily, "Your niece, uncle."

"Sister! I have no sister! who dares to say I have a sister?" said Mr. Mounsey of Mounsey Park, fiercely.

"Hear to him! Hear to him how he disowns his own flesh and blood!" cried Mrs. Jones, more tearfully than before. "Oh, Morley Magnus, that ever I should have lived to see this day! And mother and me has always looked for you to come when your time was out, and you was a free man once again; and father died in trouble, and the bailies took our house!"

"Silence, you old witch!" shouted the owner of Mounsey Park; but Mary, who had a spirit, flashed out with "Witch yourself, old man. No one shall miscall my mother to my face, if he were twenty times an uncle!" And the two Cobbolds rubbed their hands behind their hats, and looked as if they liked it.

"My word, but she has a spirit, Will!" whispered the father, with a grin.

"Fine!" returned Will, with an approving nod.

Her tone startled Mr. Mounsey into sudden reflection.

"There must be some mistake here," he said in a mild voice, turning to Mrs. Dormer and Letty, and speaking in a conciliating manner.

"No, ladies, there is none," said Mrs. Jones. "That man is my own brother, who got into a little bit of trouble when he was a lad, about some sheep as found their way to father's. He were transported, he were, sorry I am to say it; and when his time was out he wrote as how he had gone farther off to foreign parts. But he never wrote no more, though we heard of him, and how he had made mines of gold. He

left us to starve, if we'd a mind. He never sent us a new sixpence, or a pair of old shoes, though he knew we were bound to be in trouble when father died. His name is Morley Magnus Mounsey, ladies. His poor father, he named him the three M.'s after Mr. Morley—he were the chemist, and Magnus were the draper, of our town—who was his godfather, and stood for him. And this girl of mine, Will Cobbold's wife—and a good girl she is, and a tidy wife he have got, though I say it as shouldn't, and though she has a spirit as would face a lion—she's a Mounsey too. For I kept the old name to her, as the Mounseys they was better blood than the Jones's; and many's the time poor Jones and me have had words on the same. And hearing from Will Cobbold there that you had Morley Magnus here among you, I made bold to come and see if he would help me and mine—for I am only a lone widow, ladies—and maybe raise Will and his father a bit in the world."

"Raise them so high, my fine friends, that you will all be indicted for conspiracy and trying to extort money," said Mr. Mounsey. "In seeking to ruin me you have only destroyed yourself; and, by the Lord, you shall have it hot!" he cried, passionately.

"Mamma, this man is too hateful," said Letty, indignantly. "A thief, a convict, the brother of a woman like this—it is surely done with now!"

"You will be prepared with that little sum I spoke of this day week, when your bill falls due?" said Mr. Mounsey, with a frigid bow to Mrs. Dormer, and a fiery glance to Letty, whom else he ignored.

"Yes," said Letty, boldly.

Mr. Mounsey raised his eyebrows.

"Undeveloped resources," he said, with a sneer, still addressing Mrs. Dormer. "I can scarcely think your young beggar friend, Mr. Ratcliffe, can raise the funds; but I presume you know where to find your market. You have missed one good settlement, madam; better luck next time!"

And, with an insolent laugh, he took his hat, and passed out.

"Pay it?" said George, when Letty told him all; "why, of course I will pay it. I can raise the money; never you mind how, Letty. We shall only have to wait a little longer, and work a little harder, and maybe live a little simpler, that is all. But

we are safe now, and I think the money well spent."

"Ah! what a thing it is to have to do with a gentleman," said Mrs. Dormer, with languid enthusiasm, and her usual happy knack of setting herself just that one step in front of her circumstances which is the line that separates welcome from resignation. "Now, Mr. Mounsey was rich, but he was not a gentleman. And to think of Letty being old Cobbold's niece—how horrible!"

"And the wife of a convict," put in George, a little grimly.

"I should not have been old Will's niece, only his son's wife's mother's," laughed Letty; she had begun to laugh again in these later times. "That would have been near enough, however. Not that I should have minded Mrs. Jones, or Will Cobbold, or the convict taint either, George, if it had been you," she added, fondly.

"My dear, don't suggest such horrible ideas," said Mrs. Dormer, shuddering. "There are certain subjects which are not to be jested on."

"So Mr. Mounsey seems to think," said George; "for I heard that he has left the Park, and put it into Brille's hands for sale."

"What a blessing," said Letty.

But her mother, with a glance in the mirror opposite, looked dubious.

"I am sorry it has all come out so ill against him," she said. "He was not a gentleman; but, all the same, Mounsey Park was a charming domain."

"Even with Will Cobbold at the gates, and that conviction for sheep stealing to be turned up at any time?" asked George, a trifle contemptuously.

"Money can do a great deal," answered Mrs. Dormer.

"Yes, it can," replied George, drawing Letty to him tenderly. "It can heal two broken hearts, and make two despairing wretches the happiest people in the world—can't it, Letty?"

"Yes, George," said Letty, with her arms round his neck.

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